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Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection



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DEP Issues Permit for First Mercury-Containing Lamp Recycling Facility

Mercury-containing lamps (such as fluorescent lamps, high-intensity discharge lamps (HID), and specialty lamps) contain quantities of mercury that pose a threat to human health and the environment when improperly managed. National use of mercury containing lamps exceeds 650 million units annually, and their improper disposal results in over 28,000 pounds of mercury entering our environment. In Connecticut alone, over 400 pounds of mercury is generated from spent lamps each year. This mercury contaminates our lakes, rivers, fish, and drinking water. Research conducted by the lighting industry and state and federal regulatory agencies has shown that almost without exception, fluorescent and HID lamps fail the test for mercury and are therefore classified as hazardous waste. In addition, the landfilling and incineration of mercury-containing lamps is the second largest source of mercury contamination in the United States, and probably the easiest to eliminate through recycling.

In September, 1995, an application was filed by Northeast Lamp Recycling Inc. (NLR) to construct and operate a solid waste volume reduction plant for the safe and environmentally sound treatment, recycling and disposal of waste mercury-containing lamps. In May, 1996, after a lengthy public hearing, a permit to construct was issued along with a temporary permit to operate which allowed NLR to conduct environmental testing. The testing, which was completed in June of 1996, indicated compliance with the conditions of the permits and a final operating permit was issued in July, 1996. NLR's process separates mercury-containing lamps into recyclable component parts consisting of glass, mercury-powders and metals which are then reused, making the waste lamps nearly 100% recyclable.

Although there are a few mercury-containing lamp recycling facilities now operating in New England, NLR is the first such recycling facility to be permitted for operation in Connecticut. As a hazardous waste, mercury-containing lamps are subject to the full requirements of the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Subtitle C and Chapter 446 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS). In an effort to promote better management and recycling of these wastes, the Department is taking steps to ease the regulatory burden on lamp generators, thereby reducing the expense of properly managing this waste. The Waste Management Bureau is in the process of amending its current hazardous waste management regulations to adopt EPA's Universal Waste Rule. When this rule is adopted, mercury-containing lamps will be listed as a "universal waste" within Connecticut. As a universal waste, mercury-containing lamps failing RCRA Subtitle C testing will still be considered a hazardous waste. However, many of the requirements, such as manifesting and the use of permitted transporters, will not be required and other requirements will also be reduced.

The Waste Management Bureau has developed a fact sheet for general distribution that will help ensure the safe and environmentally sound management of mercury-containing lamps by providing generators with information on the regulation and proper management of these lamps. While households which generate these lamps are exempt from regulation, the Department strongly encourages them to bring their waste lamps to a municipal household hazardous waste collection facility or collection day. The fact sheet will be available by the end of August. For further information, contact the Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division (860) 424-3366.



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General Permit for Paint and Stain Collection

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The DEP Waste Bureau has developed a general permit for the management of latex and oil-based paint and stain. The permit would allow for two types of facilities; a paint and stain drop facility, and a paint and stain bulking facility. The permit is available for public comment until August 27.

The goal of the general permit is to allow municipalities management alternatives for paints and stains. Paint in particular is the most prevalent waste brought into household hazardous waste collection days. The general permit also allows a management alternative for those towns that choose not to participate in HHW collections but have identified a need to manage waste paint.

The permit allows for the collection, exchange, and storage of oil-based and latex paint, and stain. Permit holders are encouraged to exchange usable paint and stain. Any unwanted paint can be recycled. Latex paint which is not exchanged or recycled can be solidified and managed as a solid waste. Oil-based paints and stains which are not exchanged or recycled can be transported to a permitted household hazardous waste facility, or offered to a permitted hazardous waste transporter for recycling or management as a hazardous waste. Paint and stain bulking facilities will be allowed to bulk cans of paint into 55-gallon drums, and accept and puncture aerosol paint cans.

To receive a copy of the draft paint and stain general permit, contact Tom Metzner at (860) 424-3365.

Buy Recycled Recycled Office Paper - Closing the Loop Gets Easier

With waste paper prices depressed, this is the ideal time to renew (or begin) a commitment to buy printing & writing paper with at least a 20% post-consumer content. The new contract for state agencies for printing & writing paper (effective through May 31, 1999) is open to purchase by political subdivisions and non-profits and includes:

- White xerographic paper (8½ x 11 and 8½ x 14) - 50% recycled, 20% post-consumer content; Boise Cascade - Aspen;
- Color bond paper (8½ x 11) - 50% recycled, 20% post-consumer content; Hammermill Fore DP; and
- 25% rag bond (8½ x 11) - 50% recycled, 20% post-consumer content; Easter Certificate Bond.

If you fall under the category of "political subdivision" or "non-profit" you can take advantage of the economies of scale and buy under the state contract. Even if you are not a political subdivision, or non-profit, or a state agency, now is the time to buy 20% minimum post-consumer recycled content printing and writing paper. There are some great quality papers out there, and the price is right. If you would like additional information, you can call Judy Belaval at the DEP Recycling Office at (860) 424-3365.

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